

# A Corpus Linguistics Primer

## Through AntConc

# What is a corpus?

*What?*

*It's so simple.*

*It's just a lot of words!*

Well, not exactly.

# What is a corpus?

A machine readable collection of texts from spoken or written sources that were created in a natural expressive context.

**Machine readable:** text formats that can be loaded, parsed and manipulated independent of platforms. Despite being technically 'open', they can have dense annotations identifying various kinds of descriptive features. Typically these files are stored in the form of plain text files stored in ASCII or UTF encoding or structured XML files.

**Natural expressive context:** texts that were not created for the purpose of corpus analysis; in other words, texts that partake in an authentic communication.

**A machine readable collection of texts from spoken or written sources that were created in a natural expressive context.**

It constitutes methodology for studying the nature of language.

In such a collection, it is expected that there is an intention:

- To identify the collection as representative and balanced in the context of a language, variety, register, or genre. It has a purpose, in other words, so it should aim to reference what is typical.
- To analyse the collection linguistically (attention to word frequency, language change, morphemes, and the like), with explicit annotations.

# Types of corpora

**General:** represents a language in a holistic way.

**Specific:** restricted to a particular variety, register, or purpose.

**Raw:** contains files of only corpus material (plain text)

**Annotated:** contains additional descriptive information (usually with metadata), encoded with parts-of-speech tags, or XML tags under the guidelines of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) or Corpus Encoding Standard (CES). Annotated corpora include information *about* the text within *markup*. This kind of corpus can also be *lemmatized* (each word is followed by its lemma—the standard form that you would look up in the dictionary).

## More types of corpora

**Diachronic:** shows language change over time.

**Synchronic:** shows a snapshot of language in a time.

**Monolingual:** shows one language.

**Parallel:** shows the same text in multiple languages.

**Static:** have a fixed size (e.g. British National Corpus).

**Dynamic:** can be constantly extended (e.g. Bank of England).

# Does this analysis constitute a theory of language?

*Strictly speaking*, no. These analyses offer loads of information about huge amounts of textual data, but they only offer information about frequencies. There is no straightforward semantic meaning in a corpora; what you are seeing in corpus analysis is:

- Frequencies of items (how often words or morphemes or grammatical structures occur in a text)
- Frequencies of co-occurring things (that is, groups of words or grammatical structures)

The work of interpretation still needs to be done; you need to decide what is meaningful. Remember, though, that ***formal differences reflect functional differences***. Formal qualities illustrate functional regularities in communication.

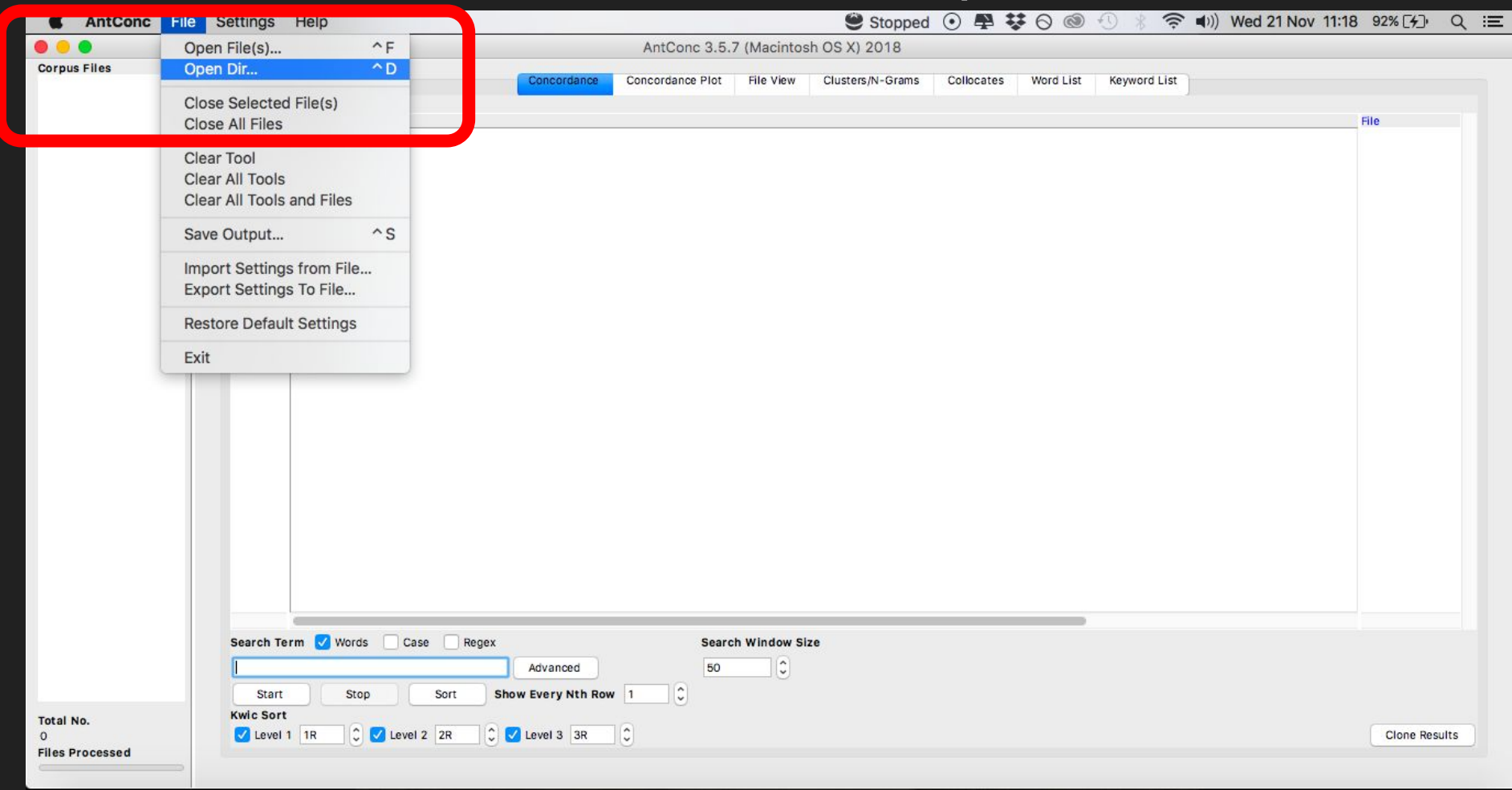
**AntConc** <<http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html>>

**Pros:** Free, well-maintained application; can search and analyse multiple texts in a corpus; has impressive key-word-in-context functions.

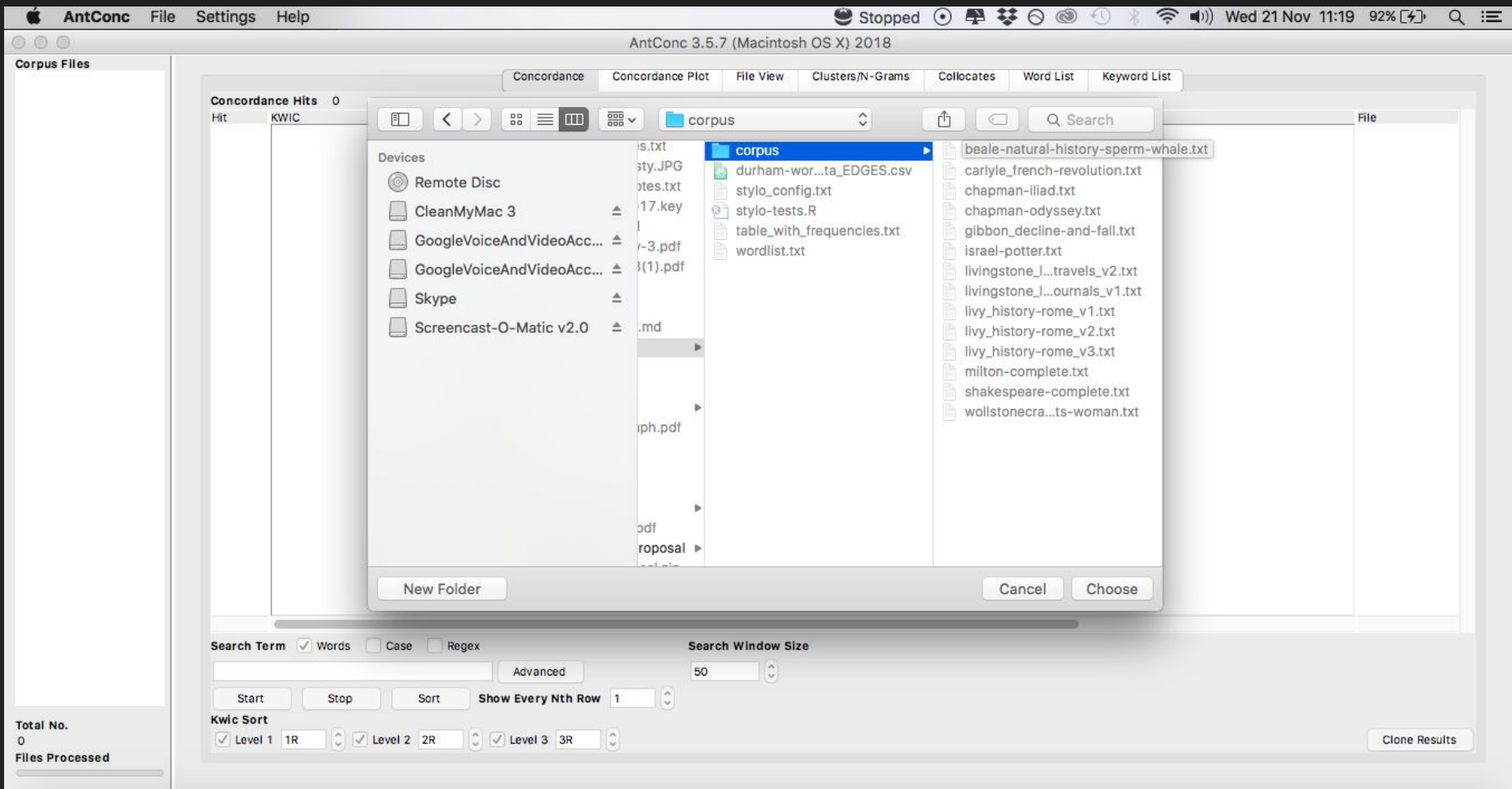
**Cons:** It can only perform basic corpus analyses (i.e., it cannot do more complex linguistic analyses).



# Getting started: File > OpenDir



# Choose a corpus folder with texts



After texts have loaded, click the Word List tab (top right), then click Start (lower left) to generate a word list

The screenshot shows the AntConc 3.5.7 (Macintosh OS X) 2018 interface. The 'Word List' tab is selected and highlighted with a red box. The 'Start' button is also highlighted with a red box. The interface includes a 'Corpus Files' list on the left, a main display area for word lists, and a bottom section with search and sorting options.

**Corpus Files**

- beale-natural-history-spe
- carlyle\_french-revolution.1
- chapman-iliad.txt
- chapman-odyssey.txt
- gibbon\_decline-and-fall.tx
- israel-potter.txt
- livingstone\_last-journals\_v
- livingstone\_last\_travels\_v2
- livy\_history-rome\_v1.txt
- livy\_history-rome\_v2.txt
- livy\_history-rome\_v3.txt
- milton-complete.txt
- shakespeare-complete.txt
- wollstonecraft\_vindication

**Word Types:** 0 **Word Tokens:** 0 **Search Hits:** 0

**Word List** (highlighted)

**Search Term:** ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex

**Hit Location:**

**Start** (highlighted)

**Lemma List:** ☐ Loaded

**Word List:** ☐ Loaded

**Sort by:** ☐ Invert Order

**Total No.:** 14  
**Files Processed:**

# This is what you should get

AntConc 3.5.7 (Macintosh OS X) 2018

Corpus Files

- beale-natural-history-spe
- carlyle\_french-revolution.1
- chapman-iliad.txt
- chapman-odyssey.txt
- gibbon\_decline-and-fall.tx
- israel-potter.txt
- livingstone\_last-journals\_v
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- livy\_history-rome\_v1.txt
- livy\_history-rome\_v2.txt
- livy\_history-rome\_v3.txt
- milton-complete.txt
- shakespeare-complete.txt
- wollstonecraft\_vindication

Word Types: 80653 Word Tokens: 5631007 Search Hits: 0

Concordance Concordance Plot File View Clusters/N-Grams Collocates Word List Keyword List

Rank Freq Word Lemma Word Form(s)

1	464979	the	
2	289862	of	
3	211613	and	
4	129176	to	
5	95682	a	
6	87198	in	
7	66126	his	
8	55213	that	
9	51994	was	
10	51672	by	
11	48763	with	
12	42753	he	
13	40930	their	
14	38288	i	
15	32977	as	
16	31829	were	
17	31572	is	
18	31027	for	
19	30063	but	
20	29683	which	
21	29582	it	
22	29325	from	
--	-----	.	

Search Term ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex

Hit Location

Search Only 0

Lemma List ☐ Loaded

Word List ☐ Loaded

Sort by ☐ Invert Order

Sort by Freq

Total No. 14 Files Processed

Clone Results

# Now click on the Concordances tab and enter a search term

Concordance

Concordance Plot

File View

Clusters/N-Grams

Collocates

Word List

Keyword List

Concordance Hits 5151

Hit	KWIC	File
1	are revived as to the results of the	war_ * * * * *
2	kes must arbitrate. Towards which advance the	war.
3	As black as Vulcan in the smoke of	war. A baubling vessel was he captain of, For
4	Romans considered their being at liberty to make	war, a certain victory; while the Samnites supposed t
5	had been reduced to a few by intestine	war, a colony should be sent thither as a
6	vexing them, and breed (to soothe their childish	war) A common ill to many men, since if
7	, when I reflect that, in the first Punic	war, a contest was maintained by the Romans with
8	of Africa, (A.D. 439,) and before Attila's	war, (A.D. 451.)] 78 (return) [ The Bagaudae of Spai
9	, for an instant, the operations of an active	war. A dark conspiracy was detected by the penetratio
10	, for an instant, the operations of an active	war. A dark conspiracy was detected by the penetratio
11	always been successful in the event of the	war." A few days after the departure of Narses,
12	always been successful in the event of the	war." A few days after the departure of Narses,
13	allow the state to breathe in time of	war. 27. A fire which broke out in several places
14	housand horse, together with thirty-five ships of	war, a force of no small importance to bring
15	the more improved state of the art of	war, a general is seldom required, or even permitted
16	the more improved state of the art of	war, a general is seldom required, or even permitted
17	enemy equally skilled in all the instruments of	war. A generous emulation inspired the Romans and the
18	enemy equally skilled in all the instruments of	war. A generous emulation inspired the Romans and the
19	, containing food to be used in case of	war. A large cow is kept up there, which
20	had arisen in arms, they were neglecting the	war, a letter was brought from Quintus Minucius, anno
21	might not pass the year entirely exempt from	war, a little expedition was made into Umbria; intell
22	hichte des Osmanischen Reiches. (M.) I. For every	war, a motive of safety or revenge, of honor
23	hichte des Osmanischen Reiches. (M.) I. For every	war, a motive of safety or revenge, of honor
24	as bad as falling; the toil o' th'	war. A pain that only seems to seek out

Search Term ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex

war

Advanced

Search Window Size 50

Start Stop Sort Show Every Nth Row 1

Kwic Sort

☒ Level 1 1R ☒ Level 2 2R ☒ Level 3 3R

Clone Results



# Adjust the concordance results from right to left

AntConc 3.5.7 (Macintosh OS X) 2018

Concordance Concordance Plot File View Clusters/N-Grams Collocates Word List Keyword List

Concordance Hits 831

Hit	KWIC	File
1	life with dignity, and to acquire wisdom and virtue by the exercise of	wollstonecraft_\
2	, paid for their schooling, and acquired wisdom by the favour and mediation of	montaigne_com
3	not complain if he neither acquires wisdom nor respectability of character. Supposin	wollstonecraft_\
4	takes away everything else, it adds wisdom to old age. Even war, that	plutarch_morals
5	study, that we discover the adorable wisdom of God in his works: when	burke_on-sublir
6	.] In the civil administration of Alexander, wisdom was enforced by power, and the	gibbon_decline
7	. In the civil administration of Alexander, wisdom was enforced by power, and the	gibbon_decline
8	unknown to man. From His all wisdom nothing but good, common; and regular	montaigne_com
9	of the finest thread, and all wisdom is folly that does not accommodate	montaigne_com
10	fine precepts are vanity, and all wisdom is vanity: "Dominus novit cogitationes	montaigne_com
11	prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek	gibbon_decline
12	prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek	gibbon_decline
13	of the passions is not always wisdom. On the contrary, it should seem,	wollstonecraft_\
14	visited the memorable scenes of ancient wisdom or glory, have confessed the inspiration	gibbon_decline
15	visited the memorable scenes of ancient wisdom or glory, have confessed the inspiration	gibbon_decline
16	necks of a people, whose ancient wisdom and power ascend beyond the records	gibbon_decline
17	necks of a people, whose ancient wisdom and power ascend beyond the records	gibbon_decline
18	man would possess more virtue and wisdom than a number of men; and	federalist_pape

Search Term ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex

Advanced

Start Stop Sort Show Every Nth Row 1

Kwic Sort ☒ Level 1 1L ☒ Level 2 2R ☒ Level 3 3R

Total No. 15  
Files Processed

Clone Results

# Use the “Sort” button to arrange alphabetically

AntConc 3.5.7 (Macintosh OS X) 2018

Concordance   Concordance Plot   File View   Clusters/N-Grams   Collocates   Word List   Keyword List

Concordance Hits 831

Hit	KWIC	File
1	life with dignity, and to acquire wisdom and virtue by the exercise of	wollstonecraft_
2	, paid for their schooling, and acquired wisdom by the favour and mediation of	montaigne_com
3	not complain if he neither acquires wisdom nor respectability of character. Supposin	wollstonecraft_
4	takes away everything else, it adds wisdom to old age. Even war, that	plutarch_morals
5	study, that we discover the adorable wisdom of God in his works: when	burke_on-sublir
6	.] In the civil administration of Alexander, wisdom was enforced by power, and the	gibbon_decline-
7	. In the civil administration of Alexander, wisdom was enforced by power, and the	gibbon_decline-
8	unknown to man. From His all wisdom nothing but good, common; and regular	montaigne_com
9	of the finest thread, and all wisdom is folly that does not accommodate	montaigne_com
10	fine precepts are vanity, and all wisdom is vanity: "Dominus novit cogitationes	montaigne_com
11	prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek	gibbon_decline-
12	prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek	gibbon_decline-
13	of the passions is not always wisdom. On the contrary, it should seem,	wollstonecraft_
14	visited the memorable scenes of ancient wisdom or glory, have confessed the inspiration	gibbon_decline-
15	visited the memorable scenes of ancient wisdom or glory, have confessed the inspiration	gibbon_decline-
16	necks of a people, whose ancient wisdom and power ascend beyond the records	gibbon_decline-
17	necks of a people, whose ancient wisdom and power ascend beyond the records	gibbon_decline-
18	man would possess more virtue and wisdom than a number of men; and	federalist-nape

Search Term ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex

wisdom Advanced 50

Start Stop Sort Show Every Nth Row 1

Kwic Sort

☒ Level 1 1L ☒ Level 2 2R ☒ Level 3 3R

Clone Results

Corpus Files

- burke\_on-sublime-and-be
- burton\_anatomy-of-melan
- carlyle\_french-revolution.1
- federalist-papers.txt
- gibbon\_decline-and-fall-ri
- livy\_history-of-rome\_v1.tx
- livy\_history-of-rome\_v2.tx
- livy\_history-of-rome\_v3.tx
- livy\_history-of-rome\_v4.tx
- montaigne\_complete-esss
- plutarch\_morals.txt
- schopenhauer\_counsels-a
- schopenhauer\_studies-in-
- thomas-paine\_complete.t
- wollstonecraft\_vindication

Total No. 15

Files Processed

# Use regular expressions to do flexible searches: wildcard (\*), ? and pipe (|)

AntConc 3.5.7 (Macintosh OS X) 2018

Corpus Files

- 1590 Love's Labour's Los
- 1591 Romeo and Juliet.tx
- 1591 Two Gentlemen of V
- 1592 Titus Andronicus.tx
- 1599 Hamlet.txt
- 1599 Julius Caesar.txt
- 1599 King Henry V.txt
- 1599 Merry Wives of Win
- 1599 Twelfth Night or Wh
- 1600 Much Ado about No
- 1602 Troilus and Cressid
- 1604 Measure for Measur
- 1604 Othello.txt
- 1605 King Lear.txt
- 1607 Antony and Cleopat
- 1607 Timon of Athens.txt
- 1608 Coriolanus.txt
- 1608 Pericles Prince of T
- 1610 Cymbeline.txt
- 1610 Winter's Tale.txt
- 1610 Cymbeline.txt
- 1610 Cymbeline.txt
- 1610 Cymbeline.txt
- 1610 Cymbeline.txt
- 1610 Cymbeline.txt
- 1608 Pericles Prince of T
- 1610 Cymbeline.txt
- 1610 Winter's Tale.txt
- 1610 Winter's Tale.txt
- 1611 Tempest.txt
- 1613 King Henry VIII.txt

Total No.  
31  
Files Processed

Concordance Hits 288

Hit	KWIC	File
13	... was never More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue Than thi	1599 Julius Cai
14	... then the bold and coward, The wise and fool, the artist and unread,	1597 King Heni
15	... REUS 'Tis your noblest course. Wisdom and fortune combating toge	1602 Troilus an
16	... good will, look you: you are wise and full of gibes and vlouting-	1613 King Heni
17	... , yet I'll speak. IAGO Be wise, and get you home.	1613 King Heni
18	... ne text is foolish. ALBANY Wisdom and goodness to the vile se	1602 Troilus an
19	... made them do it: they are wise and honourable, And will,	1613 King Heni
18	... him not; and yet he talked wisely, and in the street too.	1593 King Rich
19	... you love not, for to be wise and love Exceeds man's n	1599 Hamlet.tx
19	... think an English courtier may be wise, And never see the Louvre	1593 King Rich
20	... gality of nature, Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,	1599 Hamlet.tx
20	... truth: And thus do we of wisdom and of reach, With win	1599 Hamlet.tx
21	... Romeo! MERCUTIO He is wise; And, on my lie, hath stol'	1591 Romeo ar
21	... Sir Hugh hath shown himself a wise and patient churchman. Y	1599 Merry Wi
22	... of flesh indeed! Learn of the wise, and perpend: civet is of a	1598 As You Lil
23	... ROSALINE This proves you wise and rich, for in my eye,--	1590 Love's La
23	... ; to converse with him that is wise, and says little; to fear jud	1590 Love's La
		1605 King Lear

Search Term ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex  
 Advanced  Search Window Size

Start Stop Sort Show Every Nth Row

Kwic Sort  
☒ Level 1 1R ☒ Level 2 2R ☒ Level 3 3R Clone Results



# More on wildcards

Wildcards are used for matching patterns. Technically they are characters that can be used as a substitute for any class of characters in a search, which increases the flexibility and efficiency of searches.

For a full list of available wildcard operators and what they mean, go to [Global Settings > Wildcard Settings](#).

The ? operator is “less greedy” than the \* operator:

wom?n – both women and woman

m?n – man and men, but also min

m\*n is more flexible: you’ll get mean, melon, etc.

# The Concordance Plot tab visualises the search results in each file

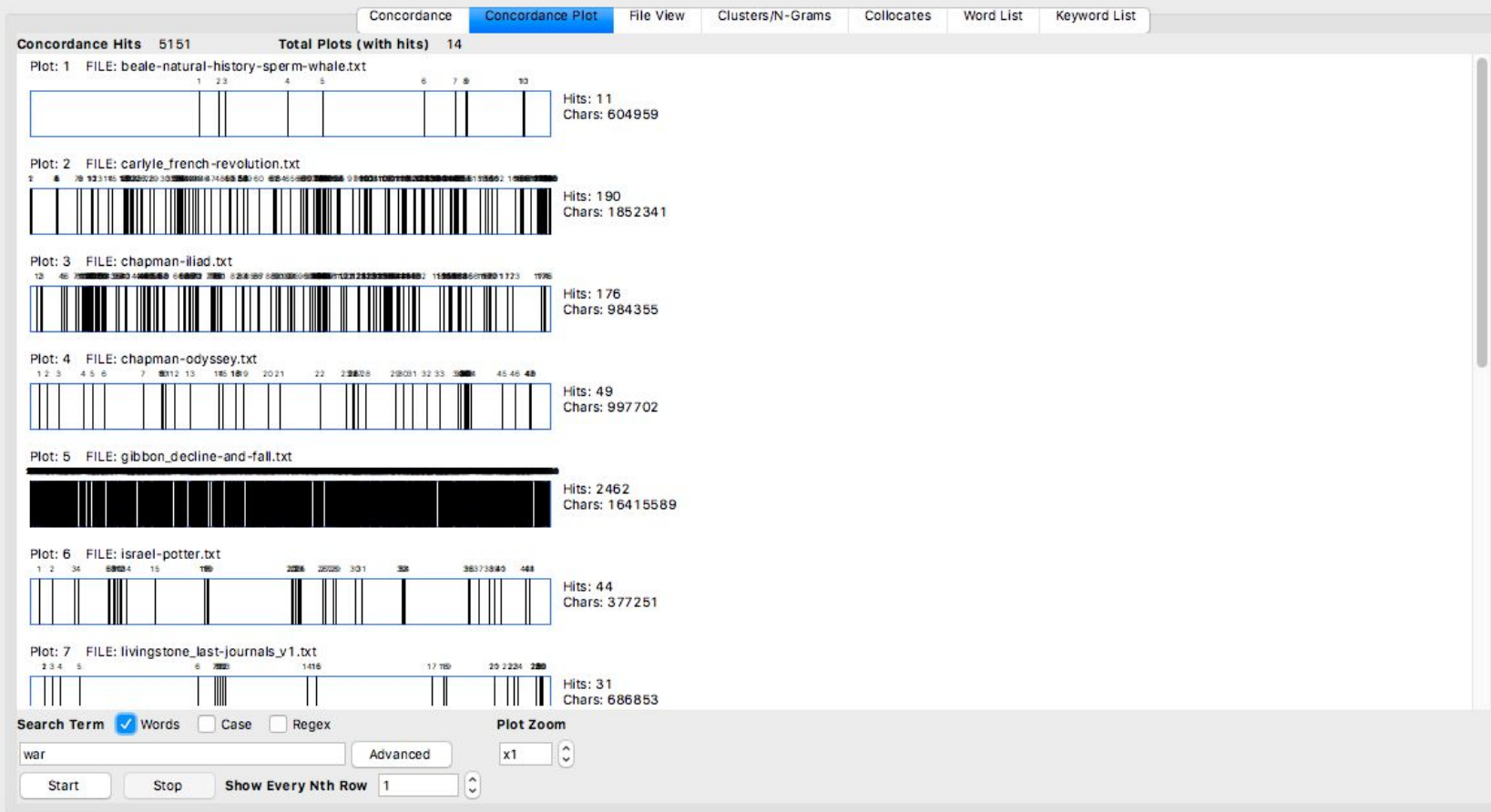
## Corpus Files

beale-natural-history-spe  
carlyle\_french-revolution.1  
chapman-iliad.txt  
chapman-odyssey.txt  
gibbon\_decline-and-fall.tx  
israel-potter.txt  
livingstone\_last-journals\_v  
livingstone\_last-travels\_v2  
livy\_history-rome\_v1.txt  
livy\_history-rome\_v2.txt  
livy\_history-rome\_v3.txt  
milton-complete.txt  
shakespeare-complete.txt  
wollstonecraft\_vindication

Total No.

14

Files Processed



# Ngram search finds groups of co-occurring words (adjust the “cluster size” to see more context)

AntConc 3.5.7 (Macintosh OS X) 2018

Corpus Files

- beale-natural-history-spe
- carlyle\_french-revolution.i
- chapman-illad.txt
- chapman-odyssey.txt
- gibbon\_decline-and-fall.tx
- israel-potter.txt
- livingstone\_last-journals\_v
- livingstone\_last-travels\_v2
- livy\_history-rome\_v1.txt
- livy\_history-rome\_v2.txt
- livy\_history-rome\_v3.txt
- milton-complete.txt
- shakespeare-complete.txt
- wollstonecraft\_vindication

Concordance Concordance Plot File View **Clusters/N-Grams** Collocates Word List Keyword List

Total No. of Cluster Types 3029 Total No. of Cluster Tokens 5151

Rank	Freq	Range	Cluster
1	118	4	war against the
2	77	6	war with the
3	60	3	war; and the
4	52	4	war, and the
5	23	6	war in the
6	22	6	war to the
7	22	3	war. in the
8	20	1	war and government
9	20	6	war of the
10	19	5	war and the
11	19	4	war on the
12	19	5	war should be
13	18	4	war by the
14	17	3	war had been
15	17	2	war. but the
16	15	4	war which he
17	14	3	war with rome
18	14	5	war, in which
19	13	2	war, with the
20	12	1	war and rapine
21	12	1	war; but the
22	11	2	war with philip

Search Term ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex ☐ N-Grams

war Advanced

Cluster Size Min. 3 Max. 3

Min. Freq. Min. Range

1 1

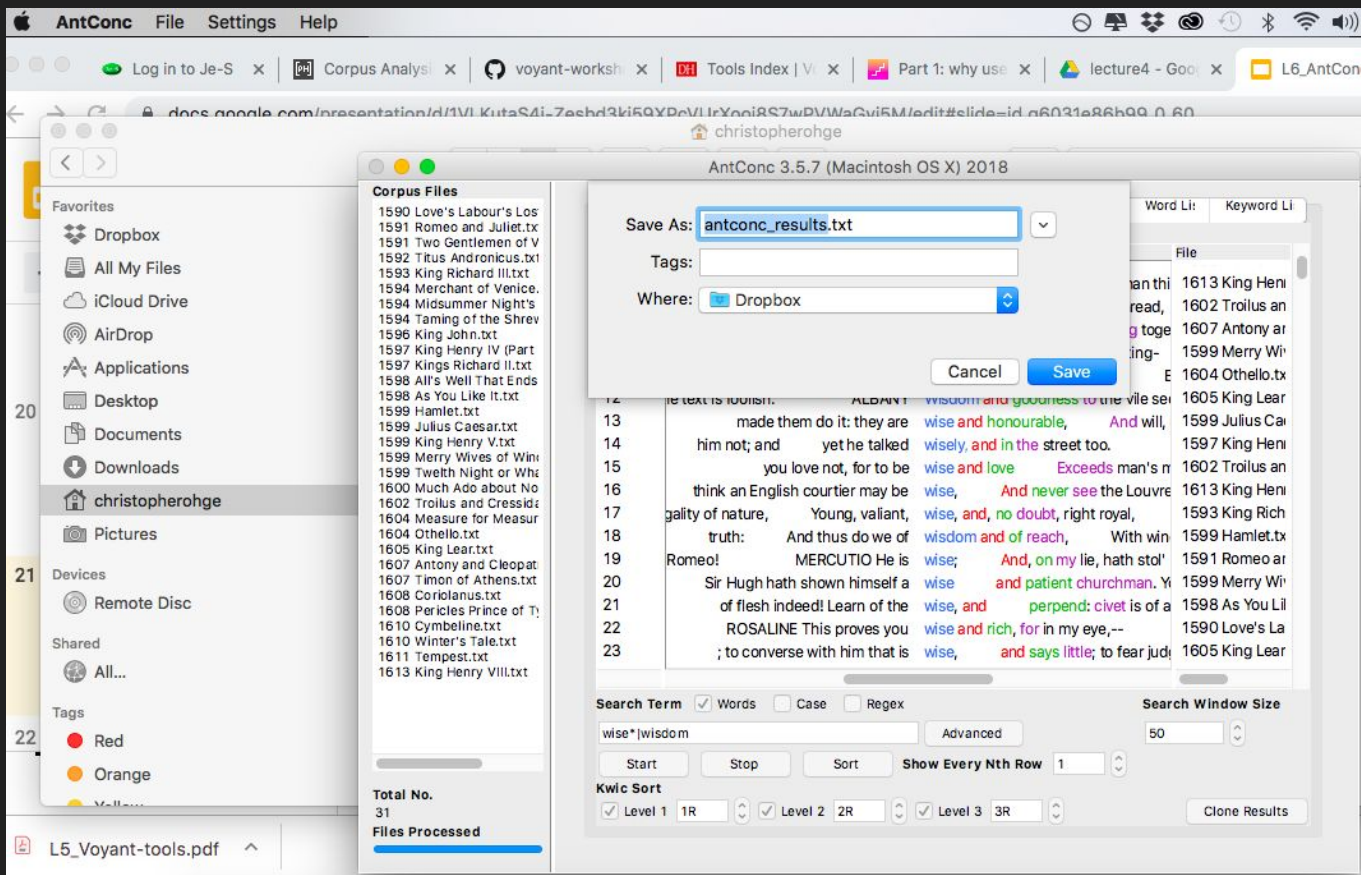
Sort by ☐ Invert Order Search Term Position ☒ On Left ☐ On Right

Sort by Freq

Total No. 14 Files Processed

Clone Results

# Save the output as a txt file



1 grace has given a precedent of wisdom Above all princes, in  
committing freely 1613 King Henry VIII.txt 30 3  
2 in nature, As by your safety, wisdom, all things  
else, You mainly were 1599 Hamlet.txt 13 13  
3 may believe: censure me in your wisdom, and awake your  
senses, that you 1599 Julius Caesar.txt 14 6  
4 Benedick. LEONATO O, my lord, wisdom and blood  
combating in so tender 1600 Much Ado about Nothing.txt 18 4  
5 , in her sex, her years, profession, Wisdom and constancy,  
hath amazed me more 1598 All's Well That Ends Well.txt 11 3  
6 , quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom And ever three parts  
coward, I 1599 Hamlet.txt 13 11  
7 : Saba was never More covetous of wisdom and fair  
virtue Than this pure 1613 King Henry VIII.txt 30 12  
8 then the bold and coward, The wise and fool, the artist and  
unread, 1602 Troilus and Cressida.txt 19 1  
9 THYREUS 'Tis your noblest course. Wisdom and fortune  
combating together, If that 1607 Antony and Cleopatra.txt 23 3  
10 good will, look you: you are wise and full of gibes and  
vlouting- 1599 Merry Wives of Windsor.txt 16 9

# Compare corpora

First, click File > Clear all Tools and Files. Then:

Settings > Tool preferences > Keyword List

Under ‘Reference Corpus’, click “Use raw files”

Add Directory > select the folder containing the text files

Click Load; when it is finished, click Apply.

Click on the Keyword List tab, and click Start. (AntConc will warn that it needs to jump to the Word List—that is fine.) (Note that *keyness* is the frequency of a word compared to its frequency in a reference corpus.)

# Exercises

1. Load the poetry corpus and sort the hapax legomena alphabetically.
2. Now sort the poetry results to find the most common function words in the poetry corpus.
3. Load the Shakespeare corpus into the program. You should still have the poetry files. How has the function words changed? Perform a basic word search.
4. In the Shakespeare corpus, generate collocates for m?n and wom?n. Now sort them by frequency to 1L.
5. In Whittier's anti-slavery poems, find the names of the poems that talk about female slaves.
6. What are the most commonly negated words (that is, words preceded by "no", "not" and "never") in the c19-20 prose corpus?

## BONUS: pos-tagged corpora

Download TagAnt at <<http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/tagant/>>.

Open the same corpus directory in the same way as you would with AntConc.

Click start and the program will generate new text files that are annotated with part-of-speech tags.

(We have made the Whittier and *Moby-Dick* pos-tagged files available on the github repository at <https://github.com/cmohge1/riga-text-analysis>.)

Now run a tagged file through AntConc and see how your results differ (hint: adjust the Kwic sort feature to 2L in order to sort by POS tag).

What is the most common verb form in the King James Bible?